COP29 in Azerbaijan: What's at stake at the 2024 global climate summit?

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Body

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The UN annual climate summit is now under way in Azerbaijan's capital Baku, with thousands of representatives from the world converging in the South Caucasus nation for two weeks of negotiations over how to tackle the climate crisis.

But the global summit has been overshadowed by the re-election of Donald Trump as United States president, who has expressed his intention to walk out of the landmark Paris Agreement for the second time. He is also likely to reduce the US's carbon-cutting commitments critical in the transition to net zero.

Countries have also failed to agree on how to fund the transition towards green energy and climate change mitigation programmes around the world.

Here is what you need to know:

When and where is the COP29 being held?

COP29 will take place in Azerbaijan's capital city, Baku, between November 11-22.

The decision to host the summit in a country whose economy is based on fossil fuels has been criticised by climate activists, including Greta Thunberg, who labelled the event a 'greenwash conference' during a recent lecture.

What does COP stand for?

COP is an abbreviation for the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, which refers to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - a multilateral treaty adopted in 1992.

The UNFCCC, which entered into force in 1994, has become a basis for landmark agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Climate Agreement (2015), which aims to limit global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by 2100.

The first COP summit was held in the German capital Berlin in 1995.

Pedestrians walk in front of the venue for the COP29 Summit in Baku on November 10, 2024, on the eve of the UN Climate Change Conference [Alexander Nemenov/AFP]

Who will participate?

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More than 32,000 people have registered to attend the COP29 this year.

These will include representatives from all 198 countries that have ratified the convention.

It will also mark the first time the Taliban will attend a UN climate conference since their takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.

Diplomats, journalists, climate scientists, NGOs, activists, and Indigenous leaders will also attend.

The Biden administration will send a delegation with officials from more than 20 US departments, agencies, and organisations led by senior adviser to the president for international climate policy, John Podesta.

The delegation will participate in the talks but will be unable to make any clear financial commitments as Trump is set to take office in January.

An activist demonstrates for climate justice and a ceasefire in Gaza at the UN Climate Summit on November 11, 2024 in Baku [Rafiq Maqbool/AP Photo]

What's on the agenda this year?

COP29 has been labelled the 'finance COP' because it seeks to increase funding to support lower-income countries in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A UN-backed report has stated that emerging countries, excluding China, need investments well beyond $2 trillion annually by 2030 if the world is to halt global warming.

Who should foot that bill has caused divisions before.

An analysis commissioned by the UK and Egypt found that a trillion dollars should come from rich countries, investors, and multilateral development banks.

The report added the remainder - about $1.4 trillion - must originate domestically from private and public sources.

In 2009, richer nations pledged to provide $100bn annually in climate financing for developing countries by 2020, which they achieved two years late.

The world's poorer nations are now calling for a new goal of at least $1 trillion per year.

Current donors are urging nations such as China - the world's largest annual emitter of greenhouse gases - and the UAE - a major fossil fuel producer - which are still classified as developing to contribute to the fund.

Agreements on the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) from all participating countries will be high on the agenda.

An NDC is a country's national climate action plan that sets out its targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with the goals set in the Paris Agreement.

NDCs must be updated every five years, and with the next round due in early 2025, this year's summit presents the perfect opportunity to finalise each member's goals.

What progress has been made since last year's summit?

The headline agreement that came out of the COP28 in Dubai, UAE was to 'transition away from fossil fuels' as part of the global stocktake.

It was an important milestone as it was the first-ever COP text to openly call on countries to wean themselves off fossil fuels.

At this stage, it is hard to tell whether there has been significant progress, as the target for energy-related emissions to reach net zero was set for 2050. Two goals, including tripling global renewable energy capacity and doubling global energy efficiency improvements, were set for 2030.

In April, the International Energy Agency (IEA) set up atracker to measure the goals set atCOP28.

Head of strategy, energy transition of the Office of the UAE Special Envoy for Climate Change, Abdulla Malek, speaks during the COP28 in Dubai, UAE, December 5, 2023 [File: Thomas Mukoya/Reuters]

Why is the central pledge made at COP28 not part of the agenda this year?

There has been no official reason stated.

However, focusing on fossil fuels may have been difficult because oil and gas make up roughly half of Azerbaijan's economy and account for 90 percent of its exports.

An advocacy group also secretly recorded Elnur Soltanov, Azerbaijan's deputy energy minister and CEO of COP29, offering to facilitate talks about new fossil fuel deals before the summit.

How will Trump's election affect the summit agenda?

Donald Trump's recent election as US president will not directly alter this year's summit agenda, but it could affect the implementation of any agreements when he is inaugurated in January 2025.

Trump pulled the US from the Paris Agreement, fulfilling his promise to withdraw from the global pact. His successor, President Joe Biden, signed the US back into the agreement in 2021.

As the world's second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases after China, a US withdrawal from the pact would have huge consequences for any targets agreed upon at COP29.

Last year, the USproduced an average of 12.9 million barrels of crude oil per day, breaking a previous global record in2019.

Trump has also regularly questionedwhether climate change is real and downplayed its effects.

How did climate change affect the world in 2024?

The EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service has stated that its scientists are 'virtually certain' that 2024 will be the warmest year on record.

The year was also marked by extreme weather events, with scientists linking storms such as Hurricane Milton, which swept across Florida and killed at least 18 people, to climate change.(Al Jazeera)

Link to the original story.

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